

## All in the Family - Part I

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Summary: Fifteen years after their marriage an old enemy threatens those Lee and Amanda love.

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### All in the Family Part I

"This is so unfair!" The door to Amanda and Lee Stetson's office swung open with brutal force. The young woman who had just flung the door open flopped herself down in the chair opposite Amanda's desk and slammed the door shut with one fluid motion.

Startled, Amanda looked at the hurricane that had just blown into her office and calmly asked, "What's unfair Lizzie?"

It had been five years since Dr. Smith had had a nervous breakdown and Billy Melrose had taken his job, leaving Lee and Amanda Stetson as Joint Section Chiefs. There were days when Lee and Amanda both missed the field, but somehow the timing just seemed right. Now, safely tucked behind their desks in Billy's old office, neither had to worry about leaving their family behind. Yes, they missed the field, but this had been the best decision for everyone involved. In those five years, Amanda had dealt with various problems with the agents - leaks, moles, burnouts - but nothing quite measured up to Elizabeth Mathers. Elizabeth had been working for the agency for three years, and she was one of the best agents Amanda had ever seen. Elizabeth had been raised by her single diplomat father; she was hotheaded and fiercely independent. While she looked every bit the sophisticated businesswoman in her designer suits, Amanda saw something more. She was also a lonely little girl that longed for the presence of a mother in her life. At 5'4" and no more than 120 pounds you'd never guess how tough she was, but Elizabeth could take out

guys twice her size in seconds. She also had unbelievable instincts, combined with just the right amount of courage.

Amanda had a special place in her heart for Elizabeth. It was more than just the fact that she was a remarkable agent. Amanda saw something in her eyes, something that she had seen in Lee's eyes all those years ago - it was a hunger, a longing to belong to someone. The only difference being that while it had taken Lee three years to let her in, Elizabeth had given in after only a year. Slowly she had let Amanda reach deeper and deeper into her life. However, Elizabeth had Lee's impulsive nature as well and she was often ranting and raving about something or another. Yet today she seemed more upset than usual, so Amanda got up and walked over to the young agent. "Well," she asked "are you going to tell me what's so unfair or not?"

Elizabeth looked up at Amanda with a hollowness in her dark brown eyes and took a deep breath. "Amanda," she began, "when you and Lee met, you were a civilian, right?"

"Yes..." Amanda answered slowly not yet sure where this was going.

"Tell me this, how did Lee know that it was alright for him to tell you the truth about the agency?"

Amanda smiled remembering the fateful day that she and Lee had met at that train station. 'Who would have thought,' she mused quietly? Then remembering Elizabeth she replied, "Well, Lee didn't exactly have much of a choice. When you're being chased by angry men with guns, you don't exactly wait on a deep background check. Elizabeth, where is this coming from, you've known how Lee and I met for three years, what's the big deal?"

With a sigh Elizabeth dropped back into the chair and let her head fall into her hands. The motion sent her mass of brown curls falling over her face. When at last she looked up she glanced at Amanda and confessed barely above a whisper, "I met someone."

"Oh," Amanda replied trying hard to suppress a smile. "Lizzie, that's a good thing. You've been alone too long. If it's a problem of clearance, we can check him out. It'll just take time."

"That's not it." Elizabeth moaned.

"Well, then what is it?" Amanda asked.

"Amanda, I really like this guy. I met him at a coffee shop just a few months ago. It was my day off, right after we'd wrapped up that big leak at the pentagon. I had gone for a walk in the park, and I was just enjoying being normal for a change. I don't even remember how we started talking, but it was like we'd known each other forever. I told him I was a journalist. It's just been so nice to be plain Elizabeth for a change. When I'm around him I feel, I don't know, like despite this huge lie that I've told him, that he still sees the real me. Does that sound crazy?"

"That doesn't sound crazy at all," Amanda replied. "Do you want me to have him checked out? I know it's not a pleasant thought, but if everything looks good you could think about telling him the truth."

"I'm not worried about him checking out, it's just - I don't want to put him in harms way. And regardless, what am I supposed to say after all this time, 'surprise, I'm a spy'? He thinks I spend my days chasing stories, not mad men with guns - not to mention that I just have this feeling about him. Apparently he had some kind of super-mom and I know what guys like him look for. They want a woman who will cook and clean and raise the kids. That's just not me. I don't know if it ever will be. Right now he looks at me like I might be that woman. I can't bear to shatter that image."

Amanda glanced at her friend. "You know Elizabeth, a very wise man used to say to me, 'stick to what you know instead of what you think you know.' Have you even asked this guy what he wants? I would have sworn that Lee would never have wanted a divorced mother of two, but look at us now."

"I just hate all this sneaking around. Clearance or no clearance, there would always be a part of my life he could never see. I just don't know if I could live with that. Amanda, how did your family react when they found out what you and Lee did for a living?"

Amanda cringed at the memory. It had been rough going in the Stetson/King household for several months after she and Lee broke the news to Dotty and the boys. It had been hardest on Jamie. Phillip thought it was the coolest thing ever that his parents were spies, and Dotty was more upset that she'd been left out of the wedding, but Jamie...It had taken a very long time to mend those fences. She hated the look of betrayal she had seen on his face.

"It was hard," she told Elizabeth, "but we waited as long as we could. When I got pregnant, well, I decided I would rather them know I was a spy than to think Lee and I had been fooling around. My youngest took it the hardest, but he came around - and this guy will too."

Elizabeth got up dejected. "No, he won't" she said with conviction, "I ended it last night. It's just too hard, too much pressure. I knew this was a lonely business when I signed up. I was prepared for that, and until I met this guy I didn't even really care."

Tears in her eyes she turned to leave the room, cursing herself for having lost control. As she rushed out the door she ran straight into Lee. "Sorry," she mumbled slipping past him, careful to keep her head down. Crying in front of Amanda was one thing, but Lee was something else all together.

"What's with her?" Lee asked seeing the concern in his wife's face. He loved the way Amanda cared for people. He knew their unit had become something of a joke - the "touchy-feely" department as Francine liked to call it, but he wasn't fooled. The care and concern Amanda gave the agents was the thing that made them the most successful unit at the Agency.

"She's in love." Amanda replied simply.

"Really?" Lee asked raising an eyebrow, "That's something I never would have expected of Elizabeth Mathers. Then again, there was a

time I wouldn't have ever expected it of myself."

"Lee, you know better than anyone that when love finds you - it doesn't ask your permission," Amanda scolded.

Lee crossed the distance to his wife in a few quick strides and pulled her into his arms. "Oh yeah, " he smiled, "Someone taught me that a while ago." He began to trail kisses down her neck, "Come to think of it, it was a pretty fun lesson to learn, think she'd want to teach me again?"

Amanda tried to wiggle out of his embrace feigning shock. "Lee," she swatted at him playfully, "We're at work!"

"Never stopped us before," he mumbled into her hair.

They were both amazed at the depth of their love. It seemed to grow stronger and stronger each day. The past 18 years had left them a little grayer, with a few more wrinkles, but every bit as much in love as the day they confessed it to one another in Amanda's bedroom. Even after 15 years of marriage they still couldn't keep their hands off one another.

"Lee, how did we get so lucky?" Amanda asked relaxing into his arms.

"I don't know Amanda, I ask myself that question everyday." He started to kiss her again, but the phone rang just as he was about to touch her lips. Groaning he picked up the receiver, "Stetson."

"Jamie, what's up?" he smiled hearing his stepson's voice on the other end of the line. Amanda marveled at how far her family had come. She remembered when Jamie could barely look Lee in the eye, let alone call him in the middle of the day to chat.

Lee glanced at her and said, "Jamie wants to know if you want him to bring anything for dinner tonight."

That was Jamie, Amanda thought. Phillip would burst in thirty seconds before the meal with little more than a thought, but Jamie always called to see if there was anything he could bring. "Nope," Amanda replied, "Tell him just to bring himself, and a big appetite - Mother's been cooking all day."

"Jamie," Lee turned his attention back to the phone, "Your mom says nothing other than yourself and an empty stomach. See you then. Bye."

"He sounded down." Lee observed looking over at his wife.

"Well, we'll cheer him up. I'm really looking forward to tonight. It's been a while since we've all been together." While Amanda's mother still lived with Lee and Amanda to help raise their 10 year old daughter, Jenny, Phillip and Jamie were both adults and out on their own. Amanda sometimes felt like she was missing parts of their lives. 'Oh well,' she sighed to herself, 'at least I know they're happy.' Phillip was a successful lawyer at Joe's firm and Jamie was a high school science teacher.

"Hey, I've got an idea," Amanda said looking over at her husband, "Let's see if Elizabeth wants to come to dinner tonight. There's more than enough food. We'll just introduce her as a friend from work. That way, she'll have the opportunity to get to know people just as Elizabeth. They know what we do, so they'll know what she does and it won't be a big deal. I can't help but remembering how hard it was to live under the shroud of secrecy. It might be really good for her to see that you can have a normal life, even in this business.

Lee smiled; thinking of just how nice it was that they weren't keeping secrets from their family anymore. "Sounds like a plan," he replied with a chuckle.

"What's so funny?" Amanda asked.

"It's nothing, " Lee said sitting down and drawing her onto his lap. "I was just thinking that Phillip may um, enjoy, meeting a 'female spy'. Who knows, maybe...."

"Lee Stetson!" Amanda shrieked, "Don't you dare start playing matchmaker with our children. The last thing I want is any of them anywhere near this business. Phillip already has this crazy romantic idea of what the intelligence world is like, and I don't want to encourage that."

"Anyway," Amanda continued toying with the gold wedding band on Lee's finger, "they're too much alike. It would never work. Elizabeth has that same hellcat fire that's in Phillip. They both need someone who stabilizes them, makes them want to settle down."

"What, may I ask, are you basing this on?" Lee inquired with a wicked grin.

"Personal experience," Amanda declared as she leaned forward to kiss him. Just as her lips were meeting his, the door to their office opened and Francine Desmond entered with an exaggerated roll of her eyes.

"Oh, give me a break you two." She complained, "It's been 15 years, you'd think you'd at least have learned to lock the door."

"Well in 15 years I'd have thought that you would have at least learned to knock" Lee countered.

"TouchÃ©," Francine replied "but no time for that now. You aren't going to like what I just picked up from that light surveillance you ordered on the airport."

"What is it?" Amanda asked as she tried to discreetly disengage herself from Lee's embrace. He had no qualms about very public displays of affection, but she was still embarrassed when they were caught in less than professional positions. Trying to force the embarrassment out of her mind, Amanda made herself focus on what Francine was saying.

"It seems that a few days ago this woman was seen picking up this man at the airport's international gate." As she spoke Francine pulled two photos out of the file and handed them to Lee and Amanda.

Amanda gasped when she saw the man in the picture. It had been 15 years, but that was a face she would never forget. Even today there were times that it still haunted her dreams. "Addi Birol?" she asked in little more than a whisper, "How is that possible?"

"Yes, the resemblance is remarkable," Francine continued, "but this man is Assi Birol, Addi's son. There are rumors that he has come back to finish what his father started."

"Thanks Francine," Lee said not missing the pale tint that had overtaken his wife's face "Get Elizabeth Mathers down here right away. I want the two of you to handle this together. Let's strike early and have this done with. Our biggest mistake with Addi was letting things go on too long."

"Right." Francine answered as she headed out the door to find Elizabeth.

End  
file.